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ABSTRACT

A discussion of multilingualism in Hungary begins with an overview of the role of minority and majority languages in the population since World War I, then focuses on the language situation as of 1991. It examines public policy concerning language, the importance of the existing multilingualism in language planning, the pervasiveness of monolingualism despite widespread language minorities, and the role of language in the educational system. This section looks briefly at the history of language policy in education, current ways in which multilingualism is addressed at each school level, the status and importance of language teaching, availability of bilingual education, and use of standard and vernacular language forms in education. A trend toward revival of ethnic languages and minority-language-medium instruction is predicted. Contains 11 references. (MSE)

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## Mehrsprachigkeitskonzepte in den Schulen Europas
## Multilingual Concepts in the Schools of Europe
## Conceptions plurilingues dans l'enseignement européen

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# Hungary (H)

## 1. Multilingualism in Hungary[1]

The Treaty of Trianon after World War I reduced the size and population of Hungary by about two-thirds, divesting it of virtually all areas that were not purely Magyar. After 1920, Hungary, once a multiethnic and multilingual kingdom, became a rather homogeneous country in linguistic terms. The national minorities in post-Trianon Hungary have included some Germans, Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Serbs and Slovenes. The rest of the non-Hungarian speakers are Gypsies, who are now officially called an ethnic minority in contradistinction to the national minorities.

In the wake of the peace treaty signed at Paris after WW II, with the aim of creating nation-states, large numbers of Magyars in Slovakia were forced to move to Hungary while Slovaks moved from Hungary to Slovakia without being forced, and most Germans were deported from Hungary to Germany.

According to preliminary results of the 1990 census, in the villages of Hungary, where approximately three-fourths of the national minorities live, there are about 71,000 Germans, 25,000 Yugoslavs (Croats, Serbs and Slovenes), 25,000 Slovaks and 10,000 Romanians (cf. *1990. évi népszámlálás*, p. 11). No data on Gypsies are available yet. About 8% of the general school population are Gypsies.[2] More detailed information on the first language of the 9- and 14-year-old population is expected in 1993, when the IEA Reading Literacy survey yields empirical data.

Under communism (1948–1989), in keeping with the all-pervading drive to homogenize society, multilingualism was discouraged, and subtractive bilingualism was oftentimes enforced.[3] According to the current constitution of the Hungarian Republic, which was proclaimed on October 23, 1989, "The national and language minorities are under the protection of the Hungarian Republic. They have the right to take part collectively in public life, to foster their own culture, to use their mother tongue, to receive education in their mother tonque, and to use their personal names in their own language" (article 68, paragraph 2).

1 The writing of this paper has been supported in part by Országos Tudományos Kutatási Alap, Élőnyelvi vizsgálatok No. 3220.

2 We are indebted to Anna Csongor (Oktatáskutató Intézet, Budapest) and Susan Gal (Rutgers University, USA) for sharing with us some of the information they have accumulated about the Gypsies and the Germans of Hungary in the past several years.

3 From the educational point of view, however, minorities fared relatively well until 1960, cf. 2.1. below.

### 1.1. Multilingualism principles

As a rule, the national and ethnic minorities of Hungary live dispersed among Hungarians in various parts of the country. Thus the principle of territoriality could be practised only in areas where minorities outnumber Hungarians. In February 1991, when this article was written, the National and Ethnic Minorities Act was being prepared for parliamentary debate. At least two preliminary drafts for the Act advocated the principle of individual and collective minority rights (Baka 1990, Bársony 1990).

### 1.2. Autochthonous and allochthonous languages

Hungarians and Slovenes are autochthonous to Hungary. Croats, Serbs and Romanians settled in Hungary before or during the Turkish domination of the country in the 16th and 17th centuries. The majority of Germans and Slovaks were settled in the newly freed territories after the Turks had been driven out of Hungary in 1686. There have been Gypsies in Hungary since the 15th century. A small number of political and economic refugees from Bulgaria, Poland and Greece were received by the larger Hungarian language community in the 19th and 20th centuries (cf. Székely 1990:1–2).

### 1.3. Status and importance of multilingualism in language planning

Language planning under communism was not done openly: whatever language policies were decided on by communist politicians were implemented in rather indirect and hard-to-discern ways. Analysis of the legal situation of national minorities shows a position of tolerance by the Hungarian majority, however, a closer look reveals two important circumstances: (1) collective rights, if granted to the minorities, could not be enforced and (2) minority rights have been granted only to "national minorities," thus Gypsies, a large "ethnic minority," have been denied those rights (cf., e. g. Baka 1990:60).

It appears that multilingualism may gain some importance in the language planning activities in the years to come.

### 1.4. Multilingualism in theory and practice. Legislation and everyday reality

In theory, Hungary is a very tolerant country towards non-Hungarian speaking minorities. Practically, however, the country comes close to an almost monolingual state. The language used in government, the workplace, or public life is nearly always Hungarian. Minority languages, where and when spoken, are typically reduced to the home or to private conversations between friends. In a German-Hungarian village such as Bóly/Bohl, Baranya County, some German conversation may be heard in the streets and a few German public signs like *Grundschule* may be found.

The extent of monolingualism in Hungary can be illustrated by a recent event which caught the attention of the Hungarian media. When on November 13, 1990 a Croatian-Hungarian member of parliament, Viljem Horvath interpellated the minister of culture demanding a regular Croatian-speaking television program, he delivered the interpella-

tion in Croatian. His choice of language in the Hungarian parliament, and the minister's use of Hungarian in answering him, made national news the following day.

### 1.5. Particularities of multilingualism in Hungary

"Ethnic and linguistic origins, precedence of settlement, and historical information generally constitute the idiom through which political claims to territory are usually expressed in East-Central Europe" (Gal 1979:34). Thus demands for language rights for the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries are often perceived as acts of covert attempts to recover lost Hungarian territories. In the political arena very often the minority and language rights of Hungary's minorities are compared to those of the neighboring countries' Hungarian minorities. Consequently the minority issues across Hungary's borders tend to be tied to each other at least in the case of Slovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. An official demand of the Hungarian government for language rights of the Hungarian minority in country X is often responded to by a similar demand for minority X in Hungary.[4] In this general atmosphere recently some attention has been called to the inadequate educational opportunities in Slovakian for Slovak-Hungarians, and in minority languages for minorities in general.

## 2. Multilingualism and school

When the Six Subject Survey of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) was conducted during 1966–1973, Passow et al. (1976:81–2) wrote this in Hungary's national profile:

> "The mother tongue is spoken by 98.3% of the population. Hungarian is the only officially recognized language for instruction or administrative use by the state. Negligible minorities (under 0.5%) have mother tongue languages other than Hungarian (e.g. Slovak, German, Romany). The language of schooling is essentially the language of the home. Language is not an educational issue."

Language was not an educational issue in the heyday of communism because the official view was that the problems related to national minorities would cure themselves automatically due to the implementation of Leninist minority policies. Gypsies were not considered a minority but part of the Hungarian people, hence Hungary's bilingual Gypsies had no opportunity for Romany-language education.

With the collapse of communism, debates concerning multiculturalism and multilingualism have surfaced in Hungary, but they have not yet resulted in any legislation.

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4 While ethically correct, the principle of reciprocity is hardly applicable due to historical, sociological and simply numerical reasons. The Slovenes of Hungary have lived in their settlements for about a millenium while the Hungarians who now live in Slovenia have only been a Hungarian-Slovenian minority since 1920. There are over 2 million indigenous Hungarians in Romania but only about 20,000 Romanians in Hungary.

2.1. Particularities of the school system in relation to multilingualism

Compulsory full-time schooling begins at age six and ends at age fourteen. For those who cannot finish their general school studies by 14, compulsory full-time school attendance is extended to age 16. Pre-compulsory schooling (kindergartens) is available beginning at age three. In addition to the eight-grade general (primary) school, the system comprises a four-grade academic secondary school (*gimnázium*) and several trade schools with two, three or four grades.

In 1989–90 the 3,527 general schools had 1,184,000 pupils. Eighty-nine percent of the pupils studied Russian as a compulsory foreign language while small numbers studied English, German or French as a first or second foreign language.

Of the 675 secondary schools 204 were academic *gimnáziums*, the rest various vocational schools. The majority of pupils in the *gimnáziums* and four-year vocational secondary schools studied Russian. English and German were the most popular second foreign languages, followed by French, Latin, Italian and Spanish.

The preceding data demonstrate that the larger part of the educational system in Hungary in 1989–90 was without any form of minority language education. Thus they serve as a general background to what follows.

During the coalition government in 1945–48, the national minorities tended to have schools in which instruction was provided through the medium of the nationality languages. There were also a number of Hungarian-language schools in which the minority languages were taught as well. Minority language schooling was increased until 1960, when the minority schools were officially renamed bilingual schools, which meant an end to education through the medium of a minority language in about half the subjects, mainly mathematics and science (cf. Székely 1990:12).

2.2. Forms of multilingualism in the school

There are three types of kindergartens for minority children: (1) mother-tongue kindergartens provide 20–30 minutes of mother-tongue instruction every day, (2) bilingual kindergartens provide two days of mother-tongue instruction a week, and (3) nationality kindergartens, which, since 1987, have provided education through the mother tongue for four days a week and through Hungarian for the fifth day. In 1989–90, ninety-five percent of the 295 kindergartens for minority children were of type (1), providing 20–30 minutes of mother-tongue instruction a day. The total number of children who received some kindergarten teaching through German, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak or Slovene was 13,108.

General schools also have three kinds: (1) those where the minority language and literature is taught in 4–6 periods a week, (2) bilingual schools in which the minority language and literature class is taught in the minority language, and singing, physical education, history and geography are taught in the nationality language and Hungarian, and (3) a variant of type (2) schools in which science is taught in Hungarian but the terminology used is also provided in the mother tongue. In 1989–90, ninety-two percent of the 43,300 general school pupils studying in a minority school were pupils of a type (1) school receiving 4–6 periods of mother-tongue instruction a week.

Secondary schools for minority students comprise (1) *gimnáziums*, which are a continuation of type (3) general schools with civic education and history of art classes added to those in the mother tongue, and (2) vocational schools for kindergarten teachers, where singing, methods, teaching practicum and other subjects are taught through the mother tongue. There are 6 minority *gimnáziums* in which a total of 600 students studied in 1989–90. In addition, about 350 German students received similar mother-tongue instruction in two *gimnáziums* where German is used as the medium of teaching. Finally, kindergarten teacher training was provided for 107 German, Serbo-Croatian and Slovak students in the said academic year (cf. Székely 1990:16).

### 2.3. Status and importance of language teaching

The proclaimed goals and objectives of minority language teaching in schools can be summarized in five points:

(1) the effective teaching of mother tongues,
(2) the fostering of ethnic consciousness,
(3) the development of bilingual skills,
(4) the creation of a demand for self-education in the mother tongue, and
(5) the fostering of the minority mother tongue and its culture.

The mother-tongue instruction in the compulsory general schools and the secondary schools for minorities is hardly adequate for the achievement of any of the above goals. Although the various organizations of minorities demand the resurrection of the minority schools in which all instruction is in the minority language (cf. 2.1. above), the majority of parents opt for bilingual education under the perceived dominance of Hungarian.

Another interesting indication of the lack of importance of mother-tongue instruction for minorities is seen in the choice of language classes in the wake of turning Russian from a compulsory into an elective language in schools in 1989. In most minority schools students took classes in English, German or French rather than their own mother tongue (Székely 1990:17–9).

### 2.4. Multilingual education

#### 2.4.1. General

The bilingual kindergartens for minorities described as type (2) in 2.2. above were introduced in the mid-1980s. So far the majority of these kindergartens have failed to achieve their goals because of a lack of linguistically well-qualified teachers and the insufficient knowledge of mother tongue on the part of kindergarten pupils. Since Fall 1987 an experimental curriculum has been used in 11 nationality kindergartens (type (3) in 2.2. above) where the ultimate goal is to build on the minority vernacular dialect of pupils and achieve a dominance of the minority language in order to pave their way for type (2) and type (3) general schools (cf. 2.2.). The Ministry of Education and Culture aims for the creation of such kindergartens in every settlement with a bilingual general school, so as to prepare pupils for successful bilingual education.

The bilingual general schools take into consideration the dominance of Hungarian as the minority pupils' second language over their mother tongue in everyday language use. In the first half year of the first grade the teaching of subjects is carried out in Hungarian. Reading and writing are taught in Hungarian concurrently with an oral-aural phase of mother-tongue instruction. Mother-tongue reading and writing are taught from the second half of the first year onwards. Singing, physical education and one or two other classes are taught in two languages in the first four years. From the fifth grade geography and history are added to the subjects taught in two languages, while mathematics and science are taught in Hungarian with occasional review classes in the pupils' mother tongue. It is hoped that this kind of bilingual school will produce relatively balanced bilinguals who can function in all spheres of life.

Five of the 6 bilingual *gimnáziums* for minorities are actually schools which provide a total of 12 years of instruction in L1 and L2 (Hungarian). The primary and secondary minority schools employ about 40 native speaking teachers from Germany, Yugoslavia and Slovakia. Owing to the minority pupils' mixed proficiency in their mother tongues, the first half of the first grade is often devoted to mother-tongue teaching alone.

### 2.4.2. Autochthonous and allochthonous

No differences can be discerned in either the educational philosophy or the pedagogical practice concerning autochthonous and allochthonous minorities.

There is a difference of another kind, however. While Germans, Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, Romanians and Slovaks are officially termed "national minorities," Gypsies are termed an "ethnic minority." Nobody denies the right to mother-tongue education of the national minorities, but most of the bilingual Gypsies have been denied the right to study in their non-Hungarian vernacular. During communism arguments for the denial included dialectal diversity and the lack of a standardized Romany dialect for instruction, the sparsity of teaching materials and qualified teachers, and some old and linguistically dubious data from 1971 according to which only about 20% of Hungary's Gypsies were bilingual, the majority being monolingual speakers of Hungarian.

In an excellent recent study of the ethnic revival of Gypsies in Hungary, Forray and Hegedüs (1990:118) claim that the Hungarian educational system continues to be a means of assimilation, in which the presence of a non-majority culture is regarded as disturbing and dysfunctional.[5] In these authors' opinion the assimilatory intentions have failed in Hungary and a new multicultural and multilingual approach should be pursued.

### 2.5. Presentation of the various multilingualism concepts

Multilingual education in Hungary has suffered from a sparsity of serious sociolinguistic research into the bilingualism of minorities. Language shifts are very advanced but their sociolinguistic analyses, which might provide important information to be utilized in designing educational programs, are all but lacking.

5 This claim is correct with regard to the educational practice in Hungary. There is no legal basis for such assimilation.

Relatively much is said about the conflict of the pupils' vernacular dialect and the literary language taught in the school, but not enough is done to deal adequately with the educational problem caused by vernacular L1, standard L1, and Hungarian.

The national educational authorities do not pursue assimilatory policies in non-communist Hungary. What is a continuing problem is the lack of qualified teachers for minority schools, which may explain, at least in part, why most minority pupils go to the "wrong kind" of kindergartens and general schools, i.e. those that provide too little L1 instruction to ever turn them into competent bilingual speakers. An infamous lack of funds for education aggravates these problems.

### 2.6. Critical evaluation of the multilingual concepts

Although the importance of multilingual education for Hungary's national minorities is acknowledged in official statements and documents, a nearly total lack of serious sociolinguistic and educational research has probably facilitated the minorities' shifting to Hungarian. Of the two or three different strategies used in bilingual schools none comes anywhere near the effectiveness of, for instance, the maintenance programs for Finns in Sweden (cf. Skutnabb-Kangas 1990:18–9). One telling gap is the small number of kindergartens offering education in L1.

Most Gypsies belong to the lowest socioeconomic class in Hungarian society. Bilingual Gypsies are often perceived by the larger Hungarian community as semilingual people. Most bilingual Gypsies are denied the opportunity in Romany instruction. Almost without exception, bilingual Gypsy children are taught by monolingual Hungarian teachers in a monolingual school. An almost total lack of qualified Gypsy teachers seems to be an unbreakable vicious circle. There is a great need for the elimination of "the elimination of the vernacular of Gypsies" attitude among politicians, educational policymakers and the larger Hungarian community.

It would be in the best economic and cultural interests of Hungary to increase the teaching of her neighboring countries' languages in her secondary education.

## 3. Future perspectives

For the past few years there has been some vigorous ethnic revival in East-Central Europe. If political conditions continue to be conducive, this heightened consciousness of the national minorities as well as the Gypsies may have a positive influence on multilingual and multicultural education.

In the future schools providing one period of L1 instruction daily should gradually become bilingual schools, and the present bilingual schools should change into minority-language-medium schools.

Drawing a comparison with Hungary's neighboring countries is an unwelcome task for the present writers. Firstly, there are vast differences between Hungary's minorities and the Hungarian minorities in neighboring countries with regard to history, sociological situation and mere size (cf. note 4 above). Secondly, a language-related pogrom

against Hungarians in Tirgu Mureş, Romania in March 1990, heated and often biased debates preceding "language bills" in Slovakia and Vojvodina, Serbia are the present context for such a comparison with some of the neighboring countries. It appears to us that the old habit of laying the blame on others' door is totally meaningless. There is plenty of room for the improvement of multilingual education in all of the countries in the Carpathian Basin.

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